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Dogwoods in Wisconsin

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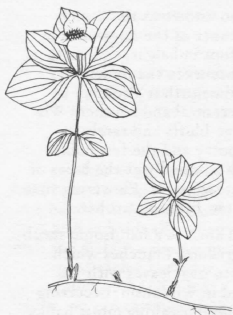
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Many persons who have taken early spring trips to the southern and southeastern sections of our country frequently remark about the attractiveness of the Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida* L.) which they observed in the woodlands of this area. They also ask why this small tree does not grow in Wisconsin. According to the publication, "Growing the Flowering Dogwood" (USDA, 1970), this plant cannot be successfully grown where the winter temperatures go below -15°F; therefore, it is not considered hardy in our climate.

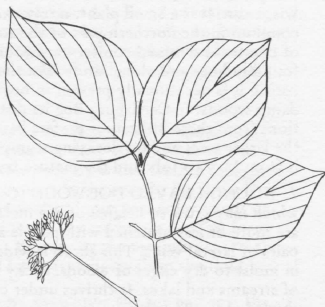
We can take some solace, however, because there are a number of attractive native dogwoods which bloom in the spring and early summer, and several of them are suitable for planting as ornamentals. These native species as well as a few introduced ones are briefly described in this report. The following key and the accompanying line drawings may be of some assistance to persons interested in identifying the species which occur in Wisconsin.

KEY TO WISCONSIN DOGWOODS

- A. Herbs, with flowering stems arising from a thin, tough, underground rhizome; the small flowers are in head-like clusters which are subtended by 4 large, white, petal-like bracts; mature fruits are bright red in color (Fig. 1.) Dwarf Dogwood; Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis* L.).
- AA. Shrubs, up to 8 meters tall; flowers in open cymes, without or with only minute bracts; mature fruits are blue or white in color.
 - B. Leaves opposite, not crowded at the tips of the branches.
 - C. Leaves broadly ovate to nearly orbicular, with 5-8, pairs of lateral veins, and with abruptly pointed tips; one-year old twigs yellowish-green with purple blotches (Fig. 2.) Round-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus rugosa* Lam.).
 - CC. Leaves ovate to lanceolate, with acuminate tips and with 3-6 pairs of lateral veins; twigs without purple blotches.
 - D. Branches red or red-brown; flowers in flat-topped or rounded cymes.
 - E. Tips of branches glabrous or sparsely pubescent; pith white; fruits white (Fig. 3.) Red-Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera* Michx.).
 - EE. Tips of branches densely pubescent; pith brown; fruits blue (Fig. 4.) Silky Dogwood (*Cornus obliqua* Raf.).
 - DD. Branches gray; flowers with bright red pedicels, in elongated cymes or panicles (Fig. 5) Gray or Panicked Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa* Lam.).
 - BB. Leaves alternate, but tend to be clustered at the tips of the branches and appearing whorled (Fig. 6.) Alternate-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia* L. f.).



1. Dwarf Dogwood (*Cornus canadensis* L.)



2. Round-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus rugosa* Lam.)



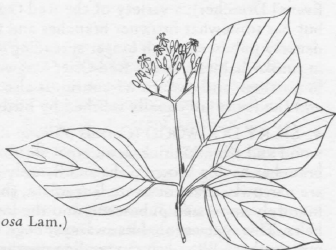
3. Red-Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera* Michx.)



4. Silky Dogwood (*Cornus obliqua* Raf.)



5. Gray or Panicked Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa* Lam.)



6. Alternate-leaved Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia* L.f.)

Drawings one-third original size.

1. DWARF DOGWOOD (*Cornus canadensis* L.), also known as the Bunchberry and Dwarf Cornel, is the only herbaceous member of the dogwoods in Wisconsin. It is a small plant, rarely exceeding one foot in height, and quite common in the northern part of the state where it occurs in the understory of conifer and mixed conifer-hardwood forests. In the north it also may be found in bogs and along sandy lake shores, while in central and southern Wisconsin it is occasionally present in bogs, on sandstone bluffs and rarely in damp woods. In Cedarburg Bog its distribution is spotty and the few collections from there indicate it prefers better drained sites, usually at the bases of the larger trees and on decaying stumps and windthrown trees. Flowering time is from May to July and the mature fruits appear from July to October.

2. ROUND-LEAVED DOGWOOD (*Cornus rugosa* Lam.), is a handsome shrub which may grow to heights of 2-3 meters, and has greenish branches which are more or less blotched with purple and roundish to oval leaves with 5-8 pairs of lateral veins. This shrub is widely distributed in Wisconsin, occurring in moist to dry edges of woods, rocky areas and sometimes along moist banks of streams and lakes. It thrives under cultivation and can be readily grown in shaded areas. The flowers appear from late May to June and the attractive pale-blue fruits mature in September.

3. RED-OSIER DOGWOOD (*Cornus stolonifera* Michx.) is an erect shrub, 1-3 meters tall, with purplish-red to bright red branches which are especially vivid in the spring. The branches have a white pith and their tips are glabrous or sparsely pubescent. Its leaves are ovate, ovate-lanceolate to nearly oval, green and glabrous to short appressed-pubescent above, and whitish and glabrous to appressed-downy beneath. This shrub is widespread in Wisconsin where it may be found in marshes, bogs, along moist lake shores and stream banks, and less commonly in moist to dry woods and open areas. This is probably the most widespread species in Cedarburg Bog. Flowering time is from May to early July, and the mature white to lead-colored fruits appear in August and persist into October.

The berries are favorite food for several kinds of birds so it is a desirable shrub for wildlife plantings. Because of its attractive reddish twigs, it is a popular shrub for ornamental plantings. Persons planting this shrub on their land should keep in mind that it requires a considerable amount of water for its best growth.

BAILEY'S DOGWOOD (*Cornus stolonifera* var. *Baileyi* [Coul. & Evans] Drescher), a variety of the Red-Osier Dogwood, is similar in appearance but has somewhat browner branches and the lower surfaces of its leaves are densely pubescent with longer spreading and curving hairs. This variety occurs in similar habitats as the Red-Osier Dogwood, but is more commonly found in northern and eastern Wisconsin. It also flowers slightly earlier, in early May, and the fruits are equally relished by birds.

4. SILKY DOGWOOD (*Cornus obliqua* Raf.), also known as the Swamp Dogwood and Kinnikinnick, is an erect shrub 1-3 meters tall, with red-purple branches having brown piths and densely appressed-pubescent tips. The leaves are narrowly ovate or ovate-lanceolate, the upper surfaces are glabrous or minutely appressed-pubescent, and the lower surfaces are whitish with small hairs. This species inhabits swamps, bogs, moist thickets and meadows throughout southern Wisconsin, extending northward to Marathon and Marinette Counties. It is fairly common in Cedarburg Bog and is probably the latest one to bloom, with the flowers appearing in late May to July. The bright blue fruits mature in late July and remain until October.

Indians used the bark of this shrub, and probably that of the other dogwoods, as a tobacco for smoking, hence the origin of the common name "Kinnikinnick." The attractiveness of its branches and fruits make it a very desirable shrub for ornamental plantings, especially in moist areas and along banks of ponds, lakes and streams.

5. GRAY OR PANICLED DOGWOOD (*Cornus racemosa* Lam.) is an erect branching shrub, 1-3 meters tall, with smooth grayish branches, the older ones having brown piths and the younger ones white or pale-brown piths. The leaves are ovate-lanceolate, with long-acuminate tips and tapering bases, and minutely appressed-pubescent on both surfaces. This species has the widest range of habitat preferences of all the native dogwoods—dry open areas to wet places, often along roadsides, fencerows and bordering fields and woods. It spreads rapidly into open woods and fields, undoubtedly, aided by birds. Because of its adaptability to a variety moisture and light conditions it is our most widely planted species for ornamental use. Flowers appear in May and June, and the white fruits, which are set off by the bright red pedicels, mature in July and persist until September.

6. ALTERNATE-LEAVED DOGWOOD (*Cornus alternifolia* L.f.), also known as the Pagoda Dogwood and Green Osier, is the tallest of our dogwoods, reaching a height of 6-8 meters. It is the only member of this genus with alternate leaves, which are ovate, obovate or oval, with long-pointed tips and mostly narrowed at the bases, yellow-green above and whitish and appressed-pubescent beneath. The young branches are greenish, streaked with white and have a white pith, while the older ones are brownish and rough. This tall shrub or small tree is found throughout Wisconsin, although never very abundantly, in dry to mesic woods and occasionally in low woods. It flowers from May to July and its deep-blue fruits mature in August or September. This plant is sometimes used in landscape plantings as a background species and may be grouped with other smaller shrubs.

In addition to the native dogwoods, the following introduced ones are sometimes planted as ornamentals.

DRUMMOND'S DOGWOOD (*Cornus Drummondii* Meyer), is sometimes planted in southern Wisconsin. A native of southern and southeastern United States, its northern range extends to Iowa, Illinois and southern Michigan. It can be distinguished from our native species by the rough upper surfaces and the pilose-wooly lower surfaces of its leaves.

CORNELIAN CHERRY (*Cornus mas* L.), a native of southern Europe and western Asia, has been planted, with varying success, in several places in southern Wisconsin. It is an attractive shrub with glossy-green foliage and yellow flowers which are in sessile umbels. The flowers appear in May and the scarlet fruits mature in late summer.

The SILVER-LEAVED DOGWOOD (*Cornus alba* L. var. *argenteo-marginata* Rehd.), with white-edged leaves and the GOLDEN VARIEGATED DOGWOOD (*Cornus alba* L. var. *spæthii* Spæth.), with yellow-edged leaves, have been introduced from eastern Asia and are sometimes planted in local and county parks. They are handsome, willow-like shrubs with variegated leaves, blood-red branches and bluish-white fruits. They probably bloom and fruit at the same time as the other dogwoods.

The extent to which these cultivated dogwoods are planted in Wisconsin is not presently known. The author would appreciate receiving any information about them, especially where they are planted, their hardiness and their dates of flowering and fruiting.

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CHANGE IN THE URBAN-RURAL ECOTONE

Conversion of the rural Wisconsin landscape from farms to housing poses serious wildlife management and utilization problems. The problems are aggravated by the unregulated and unplanned nature of the land use changes.

Agricultural land is being removed from production in three categories: 1) by direct purchase of entire farms for a non-farm residence or for "speculation"; 2) by purchase of portions of farms in parcels ranging from 2 to 40 acres for single family residence; 3) by purchase of entire farms for the construction of subdivisions. Purchase of farms for future development often results in removal of the entire farm from crop production. Occasionally the choicest tillable acres are rented or leased to a neighboring farmer, but even so, the remaining land is allowed to lie fallow and undergo old field succession. In a few cases pine plantations or wildlife food patches may be established or a pond constructed. Similarly, fallow fields and old field successions develop when the farmer himself withdraws land from agricultural use without change of ownership.

When acreage is purchased for a residence the buyer seldom develops or manages more than an acre of land around the homesite. The remaining acreage generally lies fallow or is seeded or planted to trees providing additional wildlife habitat. In contrast, construction of an isolated subdivision adds little useful habitat, but instead poses a barrier to wildlife movement and management.

Wildlife such as deer, pheasants, red fox, rabbits, squirrels, racoon and several birds of prey benefit from land abandonment and vegetational change. Birds of prey depend for food on rodent populations, including those of such species as the meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), which flourishes in the rank grass of the abandoned hay fields. Large numbers of rough-legged hawks